

from the version of the energy bill passed by the Senate, I am pleased the Senate was able to include the TREE Act provisions in the farm bill passed last week.

It is crucial for Congress to enact early next year the TREE Act. I will work with my colleagues to see the TREE Act enacted in early 2008. It matters to all who grow trees—companies of all sizes and small tree farmers as well.

Mr. BAUCUS. I appreciate Senators LINCOLN's and SMITH's leadership on this issue and I share their view. Although I had concerns about a somewhat similar provision that was considered in 2006, the fact that there is now a consensus in support of the TREE Act in the U.S. forest products industry, and that modifications have been made, have led me to support the TREE Act, and to work to include it in both the tax title of the Energy bill and the tax title of the farm bill. I understand the time constraints, and pledge to work with the Senator from Arkansas and the Senator from Oregon, other interested Senators, and with the leaders of the House Ways and Means Committee to see that the TREE Act is enacted as part of the farm bill or other appropriate vehicle early in 2008.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I agree. I have supported the enactment of the TREE Act for several years, and will work to see it enacted early in 2008.

RENEWING THE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the past month has been marked by several high profile, tragic shootings. Across the country, Americans have been attacked in places once thought safe, by people wielding deadly firearms. There can be little doubt that the plague of gun violence is continuing to permeate our society. At what point will we say act.

Early Sunday morning December 9, a young man entered a Christian missionary center in the Denver suburb of Arvada, carrying an assault rifle and approximately 1,000 rounds of ammunition. Shooting randomly, he gunned down two staff members in their mid-20s and wounded two others. Just over 12 hours later, the same gunman walked into a church 75 miles away in Colorado Springs and killed two sisters, 18 and 16 years-old, and wounded six others, before shooting himself.

Four days earlier, on December 5, a young man entered a busy mall in Omaha, NE, carrying an assault rifle. Spraying bullets at people at both point blank range and from the third-floor balcony, sending holiday shoppers running as dozens of shots echoed throughout the mall. Before he turned the gun on himself, the gunman had killed eight people and wounded five others, two critically.

Of course, these were only the shootings that captured national headlines.

Hundreds of others fell to their deaths this past month at the hands of someone with a firearm. This month caps a year that witnessed the worst ever school shooting in the United States, when a student killed 32 classmates and staff members at Virginia Tech University. Each one of these horrific events emphasizes the need for common sense gun legislation. Together they scream out for change. As 2007 draws to a close I once again urge my colleagues to help put an end to these kind of tragedies by renewing the assault weapons ban.

"NIMROD NATION"

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Sundance Channel recently aired a documentary entitled "Nimrod Nation." This eight-part series explores the world of small-town American life through the lens of the town of Watersmeet, MI, and their local high school basketball team.

Small towns have always been an important part of our country's cultural heritage. The communities and institutions that make up small towns are an essential and enduring aspect of the political, economic and social fabric of our nation. Nearly one quarter of all Americans live in rural areas, approximately the same percentage as live in central cities.

With only 1,400 residents, Watersmeet is a rural town in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The town is surrounded by the Ottawa National Forest and the Cisco Chain of Lakes. It is located in a region with a high concentration of Nordic descendants and Native Americans. In an area with not a single movie theater, the residents turn to, among other things, pastimes such as hunting, fishing, and cheering on their local athletic teams.

Director Brett Morgen traveled to Watersmeet in 2004 to film three commercials for an ESPN promotional campaign. There he discovered the Watersmeet Nimrods basketball team. The nickname came from the Biblical king Nimrod, a mighty hunter, fisherman and outdoorsman. The commercials highlighted the team's unusual name, and they sold close to \$550,000 worth of Nimrod-brand merchandise as a result of this publicity. Mr. Morgen later returned to Watersmeet to document the Nimrod's 2005-6 basketball season while creating a series about the rural town.

"Nimrod Nation" uncovers one of the many diverse cultures we have in Michigan. The residents of Watersmeet have expressed enthusiasm about the series. It explores the making of head cheese, talks with the town's older citizens at a local cafe, and covers the community's passion for the Nimrod basketball team. These events are woven together to create a portrait of what life in the Upper Peninsula is all about.

I know my colleagues in the Senate join me in recognizing the importance

of small towns to our country, as well as the congratulating residents of Watersmeet, MI, as their town is showcased in the documentary "Nimrod Nation."

TRIBUTE TO RICHARD A. LAUDERBAUGH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, it is with sadness that I announce the death of Richard A. Lauderbaugh, a distinguished and admired former legislative counsel and counsel to the Senate Finance Committee, on December 3, 2007. Mr. Lauderbaugh was a recognized health policy expert with particular expertise in Medicare and Medicaid. He served with distinction on the staff of the Finance Committee under the chairmanship of Senator Lloyd Bentsen from 1989 until 1992. During this period, he was closely involved in the development of Medicare legislation that established a fee schedule for physician services and measures to prevent program fraud and abuse.

Mr. Lauderbaugh, a native of Pittsburgh, PA, moved to Washington in 1981 after earning his bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester, a law degree from the Columbia University School of Law, and a Ph.D. in history from Washington University in St. Louis. He was appointed associate counsel in the Office of the Legislative Counsel of the Senate, where his expertise in legislative drafting and his grasp of complex policy issues were invaluable.

Mr. Lauderbaugh also served 2 years as Washington counsel for the American Hospital Association, where he provided legal and policy advice on a variety of issues including health care reform and hospital payment policies under the Medicare and Medicaid Programs. In 1992, he joined Health Policy Alternatives, a Washington-based policy consulting firm specializing in Medicare and Medicaid policy and legislation, as a principal. In this position, he worked closely with a wide range of clients including health facility and professional associations, manufacturers, consumer advocacy groups, and private foundations. On a number of occasions, he worked with my staff in the preparation of a bill to ensure access to emergency medical services. His work on a variety of policy issues contributed to the introduction and passage of many health care bills in the House and the Senate.

Throughout his 26-year career, Mr. Lauderbaugh was widely recognized for his expertise in drafting Federal legislation, for his extensive knowledge of the history of Medicare and Medicaid, and his creative skill in designing public policies. More important, he was a gentleman who patiently helped the experienced or novice staffer or client navigate the complex world of health policy. His dedication to the highest professional standards and his loyalty to friends and family were hallmarks of his distinguished career.